

# Osteoporosis

Women can lose up to 20 percent of their bone mass in the five to seven years following menopause, making them more prone to osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis is a disease characterized by low bone mass and structural decay of bone tissue, leading to fragile bones and an increased risk for fractures, especially of the hip, spine, and wrist, although any bone can be affected. Osteoporosis is a major public health threat for 55 percent of Americans 50 years of age or older. In the U.S. today, 10 million are estimated to already have the disease and almost 34 million are estimated to have low bone mass, placing them at increased risk for osteoporosis. Of the 10 million Americans estimated to have osteoporosis, eight million are women.

## Risk Factors:

Certain people are more likely to develop osteoporosis than others. Factors that increase the chances of developing osteoporosis are called “risk factors.” These risk factors include:

- Personal history of fracture after age 50
- Being female
- Advanced age
- Abnormal absence of menstrual periods
- Low calcium intake over a lifetime
- Presence of certain chronic medical conditions
- Current cigarette smoking
- Estrogen deficiency as a result of menopause, especially early or surgically induced
- History of fracture in a 1st degree relative (mother, father, sister, brother, child)
- Use of certain medications, such as corticosteroids and anticonvulsants
- Being Caucasian or Asian, although African Americans and Hispanic Americans are also at risk
- Current low bone mass
- Being thin and/or having a small frame
- A family history of osteoporosis
- Anorexia nervosa
- Vitamin D deficiency
- An inactive lifestyle
- Excessive use of alcohol

## Symptoms:

Osteoporosis is often called the “silent disease” because bone loss occurs without symptoms.

People may not know that they have osteoporosis until their bones become so weak that a sudden strain, bump, or fall causes a fracture or a vertebra to collapse. Collapsed vertebrae may initially be felt or seen in the form of severe back pain, loss of height, or spinal deformities such as kyphosis or stooped posture.

## Prevention:

By about age 20, the average woman has acquired 98 percent of her skeletal mass. Building strong bones during childhood and adolescence can be the best defense against developing osteoporosis later.

There are four steps that can help build strong bone health and help prevent osteoporosis. They are:

- A balanced diet rich in calcium and vitamin D;
- Weight-bearing exercise;
- A healthy lifestyle with no smoking or excessive alcohol intake; and
- Bone density testing.

*(more on back)*

*Be Active // Be Healthy*

## **Fractures:**

One in two women and one in four men over age 50 will have an osteoporosis-related fracture in their remaining lifetime. Osteoporosis is responsible for more than 1.5 million fractures annually, including:

- 300,000 hip fractures;
- 700,000 vertebral fractures;
- 250,000 wrist fractures;
- 300,000 fractures at other sites

## **Resources:**

National Osteoporosis Foundation

[www.nof.org](http://www.nof.org)

American Society for Bone and Mineral Research

[www.asbmr.org](http://www.asbmr.org)

National Resource Center, National Osteoporosis Foundation

[www.osteoporosis.org/](http://www.osteoporosis.org/)

### **For More Information:**

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

Office of Women's and Men's Health

301 Centennial Mall South - P.O. Box 94817

Lincoln, NE 68509-4817

Phone: 800.532.2227 Fax: 402.471.0913

[www.dhhs.ne.gov/womenshealth](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/womenshealth) and [www.dhhs.ne.gov/menshealth](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/menshealth)